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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

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TAGS: [CM](#) [ETRD](#) [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: CAMEROON: AMBASSADOR MEETS PM TO DISCUSS AGOA,
BAKASSI, ELECAM

REF: A. YAOUNDE 672

[1](#)B. YAOUNDE 687

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: On July 8, Ambassador met with
Cameroonian Prime Minister Ephraim Inoni, at his request. He
asked for advice in preparation for his travel to Washington
as head of the Cameroon delegation to the July 14-16 AGOA
Forum. Inoni is going with the Ministers of Foreign Affairs,
Finance, Trade and Economy, among others and hopes to get
meetings with Secstate and other Cabinet-level U.S.
officials. Ambassador suggested Bakassi and Elections
Cameroon (ELECAM) might come up during proposed bilaterals.
Inoni conceded significant challenges in Bakassi and said
more time was needed to prepare ELECAM to function well. End
summary.

AGOA

[1](#)2. (U) Inoni asked if Ambassador had advice for his
attendance at the AGOA Forum and for his hoped-for bilateral
meetings in Washington with Cabinet officials. Ambassador
urged him to look for ways Cameroon could take advantage of
AGOA, including reducing investment bottlenecks. The PM
plans to speak to a group of NGOs on the margins of AGOA,
hoping to strengthen Cameroon's case for MCC eligibility.
Ambassador said she thought the NGO meeting would be
challenging. She expressed appreciation for the July 4
announcement the government was lifting the suspension on the
operations of Magic FM (a VOA affiliate) and Equinoxe radio
and television. As for bilaterals, Ambassador thought
Bakassi and ELECAM would top our agenda.

Bakassi

[1](#)3. (SBU) Inoni acknowledged there were "lots of challenges"
in Bakassi (see ref B for background) and that Cameroon and
Nigeria had discussed joint military patrols. There was a
need for staff-level discussion on both sides to work out
modalities. The GRC is acting in good faith on this issue,
despite a handful of Nigerian individuals inciting violence,
he added. Ambassador noted strong U.S. interest in the
Bakassi situation and said we hoped to facilitate accurate
international media coverage of news from the Peninsula.

ELECAM

[1](#)4. (SBU) Ambassador said that in addition to Bakassi,
Washington contacts would likely raise concerns about the
government's recent decision to postpone the creation of

Elections Cameroon (ELECAM - see ref A). The PM responded that the government's anti-corruption agency CONAC had "completely lost credibility", in part because the government had not prepared for it with a budget, building and other support. President Biya was distracted by the unrest in February and did not have time to look at the list of proposed ELECAM members until his recent return from a Swiss vacation, at which time he suggested some new names. It was important to prepare properly for ELECAM ("we don't want another CONAC"), which may take less time than the six month extension allows, the PM said. He dismissed media speculation that there was any link between the postponement of ELECAM and the creation of a Senate (which he said is on track but unrelated. In any case, Senators will be indirectly elected through Municipal or (if they are created) Regional Councils, outside the purview of ELECAM, he said).

Comment

15. (SBU) Inoni had asked for the meeting with Ambassador on an urgent basis. We view him as one of the GRC's constructive players in pushing for an improved business climate (although he has not been able to deliver much on that front). Nonetheless, we were surprised by how little he understood what AGOA was about or had thought through Cameroon's objectives. We should use the opportunity of this unusually high level delegation to engage Cameroon on AGOA, where they have been less active than we would have liked, and to pursue other issues on our bilateral agenda.

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